

Neighborhood Grapevine

News from the City of Milwaukee's
Department of Neighborhood Services

DNS Nuisance Vector Section tightens "Rustbelt" around Neighborhoods

DNS's Vector Nuisance inspectors have been clearing Milwaukee neighborhoods of unsightly, rusty and some very damaged automobiles known as "nuisance vehicles". The effort has led to a record number of cars being removed for health and safety reasons.

A new code change started last summer has enabled DNS to act on cars that meet three out of five criteria: 1) Inoperable, 2) Unlicensed or improperly licensed, 3) Unmoved for 30 days, 4) Severely damaged or partially dismantled, 5) Parked on unapproved surfaces.

Since the first of the year over 1000 vehicles have been cited. Of those, 509 have been towed and the costs put on the property tax bill.

In 1999, from January to June, DNS cited 297 vehicles that resulted in 219 being towed. In the same period for 2000, 1002 have been placarded with 509 being towed. While a greater number are being cited, more people are cooperating and correcting the problem on their own rather than risk losing the vehicle. People cited are urged to follow the instructions listed on the sticker and contact the DNS office. Failure to do so will result in the cost possibly being placed on

See RUST BELT page 8



Another car is prepared for towing to the shredder. The car had no plates and the landlord did not respond to the notices. The cost of the towing will go onto the tax bill for the property.

DNS wins Public Policy Forum's Innovation Award

by Todd Weiler

The Public Policy Forum bestowed its annual "Salute to Local Government" Award to the Department of Neighborhood Services for its Rapid Record Retrieval project. This project's goal was to provide live, up-to-the-minute web access to the public of the department's ownership, permit, violations and service requests information from the Neighborhood Services System.

The tool described here is the DNS Neighborhood Services System (NSS). NSS has won the award for best innovation in the large government class.

The Public Policy Forum is a non-profit agency that evaluates and ranks public agencies and governments. The 2000 award was presented to DNS in June. The competition was open to all local towns, villages, cities, counties, public

See NSS wins award page 8

Record Number of Hits on DNS web site continues to grow

by Carolyn Wood

The web access has been very successful, with over 451,000 lookups to the data in the first 340 days (from August 27, 1999 - July 31, 2000). This represents a daily Monday-Friday average of 1,669 lookups, and a weekend/holiday daily average of 603 lookups. And the use is climbing, with July 2000's weekday average of 2,465!

The accompanying charts--a line graph shows the use by month, a pie chart shows what people view when they access via the web--violations 41%, complaints 32%, permits 13%, and recording names 12%. Another pie chart shows that the NSS web is accessed by the public mostly (85%), but that City employees also use this fast access to NSS data (15%).

See Web Hits on page 2

DNS going after noisy neighbors

by Dave Krey

The Department of Neighborhood Services has joined efforts with the Milwaukee Police Department in an effort to improve the quality of Milwaukee neighborhoods. This effort centers around the reduction of noise from loud music and parties primarily from rental properties.

A recent change in the community noise ordinance allows the City to place the cost of Milwaukee Police Department and Department of Neighborhood Services actions on the tax roll of the property owner. Representatives from the Department of Neighborhood Services, Milwaukee Police Department and the City Attorney's Office worked to amend MCO 80-60 to create another tool that can be used in situations where repeat violations have been occurring.

How it works is that after the Milwaukee Police Department has issued a municipal citation for a violation of the noise ordinance, a copy of the citation is sent to the Department of Neighborhood Services. Neighborhood Services mails a notice letter to the property owner stating that they need to take actions to eliminate any recurrence of the noise. Failure to take appropriate action and the recurrences of noise in the same unit will result in the charges being placed on their property taxes.

Thus far we've sent 54 initial notices to property owners and one second notice resulting in a property tax assessment.

Only time will tell how effective this new procedure will be, but it gives the City of Milwaukee another tool to use in its efforts to improve the quality of its neighborhoods ☺

WEB HITS from page 1

DNS went online with its new intranet early this year. Intranets take advantage of the same basic properties as the Internet, but are used for specific companies or organizations. Our DNS intranet is for DNS, and is intended to provide helpful info to DNS staff. Our intranet is organized into four main subject headings-DNS Headlines, which includes a DNS events calendar and includes DNS newsletters, etc.; Learn & Earn, which lists DNS job openings and DER's list of courses; Projects/Committees, which includes meeting minutes and departmental projects; and Ready Reference, which includes our phone list, some computer instructions, DNS work rules, etc.

The State of Wisconsin's corporation file was put on our intranet, allowing quick and easy access to all corporation names. Formerly, this information was only available on microfiche. Karen Anderson and her husband developed the excellent pro-

Anti-Graffiti Program Looking For HELP!

by Sharon Blando

Our Anti-graffiti Program needs your help!!!!Graffiti was originally used by archaeologists to describe drawings and writings found in ancient buildings and monuments in Pompeii, Egypt, and the Roman Catacombs. Historically, graffiti may have been used to depict current events. In prehistoric times, cave dwellers used ashes and berry juice to paint on cave walls. During World War II, American soldiers scrawled messages on their vehicles, such as "Kilroy was here". Today spray paint has given rise to the modern graffiti vandal.

Two categories account for most of the graffiti in our city, street gang graffiti and tagger graffiti. Gang graffiti tends to be territorial. They use graffiti to communicate who is in their gang, or who has died. You may see RIP on some doors or garages. Tagger graffiti is usually to obtain what their subculture calls "fame". Many times a tagger will join a group of 3 to 5 persons and operate as a crew. They usually select a moniker such as FCR or SMK. Their idea is how many times their tagged can be seen, and how many times it can be placed in "the heavens" (which would be on an expressway sign or on a grain silo).

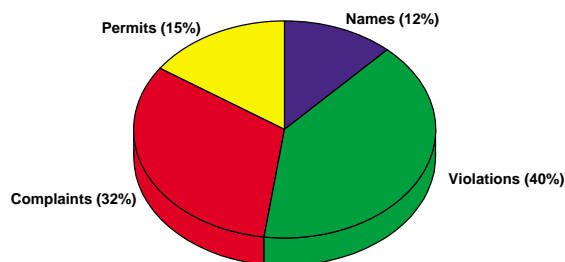
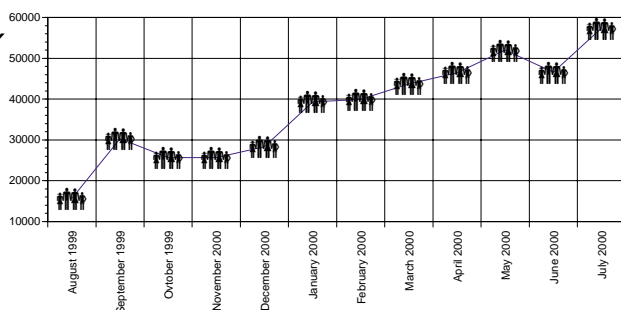
Graffiti costs the city more than just the removal expense. It sends fear to the community. Many elderly believe their garages have been marked as a home that will be robbed later. It discourages shoppers from entering into a neighborhood, and businesses start leaving. Our Anti-Graffiti Program operates a hotline number, which has handled 2,000 complaints this year. The hotline asks for the address or cross streets that have graffiti and what the graffiti is located on, such as a bus shelter, a parking meter, or a building. An advisory is sent to the owner of the premises, and referrals are faxed to appropriate parties, such as the electric company, the transit company, or DPW.

Please call 286-8715 to report graffiti, or e-mail Melinda Sallis with the information. Graffiti in progress is a 911 call. All reports on the location of graffiti are appreciated ☺

gram to convert the huge amount of data from the State into this easy to use web-accessible format. We will run the program monthly to update the data as we get monthly updates from the State.

Our intranet also includes some "quick clicks"--hyperlinks to link to the City's time entry site, the City's home page, our NSS web page, and the multi-departmental City Address Inquiry web page. These quick clicks are at the bottom of each page ☺

MONTHLY DNS WEB HITS



WHAT PEOPLE LOOK AT ON DNS NSS

DNS Rent Withholding Initiative

by Al Garcia

The Department of Neighborhood Services' (DNS) Residential Code Enforcement section has invoked a new "tool" in dealing with non-compliant rental property owners. A local Ordinance relating to withholding rent is being aggressively promoted by Residential Code Inspectors.

The current Ordinance allows tenants to pay their rent to the municipality in an attempt to force code violation repairs when the owner has allowed compliance time frames to lapse. The initiative has been used in the past, however, the department is using another component of the Ordinance to strengthen the impact.

That component allows the use of the escrowed rent for the repair of code violations related to the health, safety and welfare of the residents. The department has already used escrowed monies to address repairs on one parcel and the potential for that to occur more often increases as tenants sign up and pay rent into the property's account. Once an Inspector has identified expired orders, they have been informing tenants of the Rent Withholding Program (RWP). Inspectors have applications on hand should the client agree to work with the program. DNS is working in conjunction with Community Advocates (CA) on this initiative. Funding is provided by Community Block Grant Administration (CBGA).

Properties with health and safety related violations have copies of those orders forwarded to CA, along with a copy of the rent withholding application. Inspectors hi-lite the repair items that meet the health and safety requirement. Community Advocates staff then connects with the client to advise them of the importance of paying the rent on time into the RWP account. Once enough dollars are in the account, CA contracts with a service provider and coordinates entry with the tenant to make the repairs identified by Inspectors. Once repairs are made, CA informs the Inspection staff for sign-off. If the repair is accepted and proper permits have been pulled, the invoice is approved for payment and forwarded to the administrative section for payout. As of this writing, DNS has forwarded at least 31 applications and orders to CA for potential repairs.

Both residents and landlords are sent a letter describing the program and the process now in place. As per the Ordinance, the owner still has a chance to affect the repairs and recoup the escrowed rents.

However, in cases where landlords ignore district orders, the premise of being able to address the needs of rent paying clients is an avenue we should continue to use. Not only does the program have the potential to affect the client's quality of life, but it promotes a more positive perception of this department and the Inspectors that deal with these real life issues daily.

If you have any questions regarding the RWP initiative, do not hesitate to contact DNS Grant Monitor Al Garcia at x3445 or Residential Code Enforcement Supervisor Candice Maynard at x3976 ☺

THE LANDLORD TRAINING PROGRAM and THE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

by Vida Mosley-Person

Our mission is to provide residents, homeowners, landlords, tenants and small businesses with quality information that can first prevent - and if need be, solve neighborhood nuisances. We use cre-

ative, flexible, low cost, self-help, and proven problem-solving approaches. We provide the how to, whether through professional prevention training programs or effective crisis resolution problem solving strategies.

In the year 2000, the Landlord Training Program and the Property Management Program staff respectively, (Karin Long and Vida Mosley-Person) have always been involved in working with the community in developing problem solving strategies by participating on committees and special project initiatives. The latest stint in community unity is as follows: Karin Long is now a board member on the Rebirth Project at the North Meadows Condominium Association and Vida Mosley-Person is now serving on the Community Awareness Committee for the H.E.A.T. Program (Help Eliminate Arson Today).

North Meadows Condominium Association - Rebirth Project

Turning around a condo project that has problems is no easy chore. The new board of North Meadows has adopted the very principals taught in the Landlord Training Program to turn this project around. These professional property management techniques WORK - the proof is in the pudding so to speak. Listed are some of the successful techniques being used.

- Mandatory screening of all new applicants
- The board now has the power to evict tenants who are breaking the rules if the landlord doesn't.
- Department of Neighborhood Services has used the new abandon vehicle ordinance to pull out over 100 cars from North Meadows.
- The board has established a new cooperative arrangement with the YMCA, which is located across the street from the condo project.
- A major environmental project will take place using CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design).

The YMCA is offering day camp for the children at North Meadows on the North Meadows property. Establishing a wonderful working relationship with the YMCA is a definite WIN for everyone in the neighborhood. CPTED fundamentals are also taught in the Landlord Training Program and strongly encouraged by the Community Services Division of the Milwaukee Police Department. ☺

NIDC offers new homes....new loans

By Judy Allen

CityHomes: It seems like just yesterday when a tent was pitched on 4-square blocks of vacant land at 21st and Walnut and 43 buildable parcels for new residential construction were being optioned-off. That was 1995 and the City and Trustway were breaking ground for the first residential subdivision in the central city in thirty years. In 1997, given the success of the first phase of the development, the Department began assembling 33 more lots calling it Phase II. It's no surprise to staff that as soon as the parcels became available, they were immediately reserved. Just as exciting was the introduction of two new suburban builders to enhance the subdivision, Kuhs Quality Homes and Badger Builders. The plans reviewed and approved by

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DCD's Urban Design staff assures compatibility with the subdivision. Today, all but the last four parcels are assembled. It's hoped that the last four will be ready to market by the end of 2000. With a mailing list of almost 800 families, the City is planning an expansion to address the market demand around CityHomes.

Affordable Housing Program: NIDC's 2000 Affordable Housing Program application has been approved for funding by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago. This means the Community Homes program has \$125,000 to target to 25 income eligible households purchasing a Community Homes rehabilitated property. This is a great tool to make homeownership affordable. North Shore Bank is the participating lender, providing first mortgages to the qualified households. ☺

PLUMBING INSPECTION BUSY WITH HEAVY BUILDING BOOM

by the Plumbing Section Staff

DNS Plumbing Inspection has gotten a new sprinkler inspector, Mark Nowak, which brings the Sprinkler Section to full staff in this area. Mr. Nowak brings years of experience to the Department.

The Plumbing Inspection section will be at full staff with the addition of Michelle Burke and the return of William Kirby from sick leave. Michelle Burke started in August and Mark has a full training schedule planned for her.

We are in the process of cleaning up problems with the Permit Section and with Sewer Engineering for a timely issuance of permits with a minimum amount of errors.

The downtown area is still experiencing a booming construction building season and this has created a busy time for the inspectors. For example: The Hilton Hotel with 160 rooms with a water theme park and indoor beach; the Howard Johnson Hotel addition at 2nd and Wisconsin; the addition to the Milwaukee Art Museum; not to mention the 100-room Marriott Residence Inn and the office space in the old Gimbel's building; and a new jail at 10th and State. All this construction is changing the look of downtown.

The downtown district is not the only area that is experiencing a boom. The northwest side is also growing by leaps and bounds and therefore changing the look of this side of Milwaukee, too. For example: the Hilton Hotel on Park Place, the three-story office building on Park Place, new industrial plants on Heather Avenue, YMCA pool on North 91st Street, and the 40 sites of the Heritage Heights subdivision on 107th to 114th between Green Tree to Kiehnau.

The Plumbing industry is changing and the codes are being updated.

The Plumbing Section has received two (2) updates from the Department of Commerce-Madison, since the beginning of the year.

On a lighter note: we in Plumbing Inspection have changed our theme (for decorating) to a "South Seas-Hawaii" atmosphere. Many employees as well as the general public have been enjoying our theme – stating that they feel like they are on vacation. ☺



(L-R) David Carter, Kevin Failey, Matt Dama, Roxanne Damske, Christella Juarez and Michele Burke.

Meet the New DNS Staff

David Carter is a new full-time vector nuisance inspector. David formerly was a temp for vector in 1999. He has an associate degree in visual communications from MATC, a B. A. in Political Science with a minor in history, and is doing graduate work in Urban Planning.

Kevin Failey is another vector nuisance control officers joining DNS full time. Kevin worked in the cable TV business doing marketing work for the past 20 years. He says his real desire was to work for the City, which he has done on a temp basis for 4 or the past 6 years. Kevin is a graduate of UWM and a life long resident of Milwaukee. He shares his home with his cat "Two Socks."

Matt C. Dama is another full-time vector nuisance control officer who has worked as a temp with DNS for the past 2 years. Matt is a graduate of UW-Milwaukee with a degree in sociology. Some of his past jobs included President of a demolition and excavating and grading firm and a probation and parole agent. Matt loves the outdoors in any weather and has a pet dog and an iguana. He is married with three step children.

Roxanne Damske is a clerical worker in the Housing Administration Section of NIDC. She previously worked for 13 years at Usingers as a machine operator. She is a Pulaski High alum, has three children with her husband, one grandchild and likes to bowl.

Christella Juarez is one of the first persons people meet when visiting the 10th floor. Chris works for the Housing Section and is bilingual in Spanish. Her family is from Crystal City, TX but she was born and raised here in Milwaukee. She has previously worked as a receptionist for the Forest Service, a senior recruiter for a temp agency, and as a teacher assistant in a K-5 school. She says she's staying young with her 7 year old son. She is focusing on her son's education while attending night school and enjoying writing as a hobby.

Michele M. Burke is a new plumbing inspector. She was previously employed through the Plumbers Local 75. She enjoyed working with tools for the past 12 years, but decided it was time for a change. Her hobbies include golf and bowling which she admits not knowing enough of. Her other pastime is gardening but right now the weeds outnumber the flowers.

James Triplett is a new DNS Electrical Inspector. James is married with one daughter. He was previously with United States Steel Corporation for 16 years as an electrician and electrical supervisor. James also worked at Siemens Power Corporation for 12 years as the

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(L-R) James Triplett and Carl Futterer, Katina Robertson

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lead electrician. When asked about hobbies, James' Supervisor said he has no free time because he has to pass his State Certifications first.

Karl Futterer is a new DNS Electrical Inspector. Karl worked as an Electrician in the Construction Industry and as a self-employed Electrical contractor for 15 years. He married his high school sweetheart and has five children. His list of hobbies include hunting, camping, ice fishing, music, sports, cribbage and sheepshead.

Katina Robertson is hidden up on the 11th floor with the rest of the Commercial Inspection section of DNS. She is the part-time Office Assistant I. Katina joined the Navy at the age of 17 and has toured the country for the past 7 years. In 1998 she started her work on a Bachelor's Degree in Communication and Criminal Justice. She is currently at UW-Milwaukee maintaining her 3.0 GPA. She has a six year old son and is an active member of the Martin Luther King Center kickboxing program. She is a member of the Algonquin PTA school board and very willing and ready to take on any challenge...at least that's what the Navy believes.

OTHER PROMOTIONS

Former Residential Enforcement inspector **Kristin Bawdin** and Special Enforcement Inspector **Dan Handle** have been promoted to Construction Inspectors. Vector Control Officers **Jennifer Scholz**, and **John Cullaton** are now Residential Enforcement Inspectors. Former vector control officer **Frances Newell**, is now a Commercial Enforcement Inspector. Newly hired inspector **Kent Clark** has been assigned to Commercial Enforcement. Former Special Enforcement Inspector **Larry Govin-Matzat**, is now a Zoning Enforcement Inspector. **Erica Roberts** has been hired as an Environmental Hygienist working at the Mitchell Street office.. **Jim Igowsky** is the new assistant supervisor in the Vector Nuisance section replacing **Bob Free** who retired.



Challenged Children take on Graffiti Challenge - Kid Clean

by Sharon Blando

The Kids of the Clean is an ongoing graffiti removal project started by the youths from United Cerebral Palsy of Southeastern Wisconsin. Their success club is a group of middle school aged youth who are interested in continuing to meet and carry out community service projects. The group decided on a cleaning up graffiti in the area near their club at 76th and Oklahoma. Once they decided on their project, they put a plan into operation. They had a representative from our department speak to them; they identified the areas needing cleaning; they sent out a letter to business places stating their intent to clean up graffiti and asking permission to clean it off those buildings. Then they went out with their graffiti abatement products, and really cleaned up.

Their efforts produced a graffiti free area. This youth involvement brought an awareness to the area that quick removal gets results. With this kind of assistance to our city, our city will continue to look good. Our department is very grateful to the Kids of the Clean for all their efforts. ☺

THE PLIGHT OF THE ELEVENTH FLOOR MOVE.

by Tracy Williams

Over a year ago, our former commissioner realized that since NIDC became a part of DNS, they would need to move from the DCD building into the 10th floor of the Muni building. That would be quite a few people to squeeze in. Ok, Plan Exam was moving over to DCD's 1st floor but they only totaled about 20 people and the NIDC crew numbered over 60 people. Where are they all going to go? Someone mentioned that the lab space at the west end of the 11th floor was vacant and could be a place to expand into. The then-commissioner began to analyze which section has the least amount of public contact. (The public would not be allowed to go on the 11th floor because of the exposed air handling equipment.)

He came up with commercial code enforcement – that section that was recently at the northwest end of the 10th floor, busy minding their own business, doing a good job. Gee, they hardly ever get customers coming to their office, I'll pick them! (They do such a great job handling their customers out in the field that they don't need to come downtown to work things out!)

DNS How to reach us

286-3646 - 1673 S. 9th St, 3rd Flr
286-5600 - 809 N. Broadway, 2nd Flr
286-3441 - 841 N. Broadway 10th floor



**Have a contribution for the next edition of the
DNS GRAPEVINE? Deadline NOVEMBER 15, 2000
Email it to Todd Weiler, Editor: tweile@ci.mil.wi.us**

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WHAT IS CONDEMNATION?

by Tracy Williams

According to Webster's Dictionary, to condemn means "to adjudge or pronounce to be unfit for use or service". It also means "to pronounce to be taken for public use under the right of eminent domain".



When DNS uses the word condemn, we are referring to the first definition listed above. Our department does not have the power of eminent domain – that authority is governed by DCD. What authority DNS has is defined under the Wisconsin statutes 66.05 Razing buildings. This statute states: That every municipality may order an owner of a premises, which in its judgment is so old, dilapidated or has become so out of repair as to be dangerous, unsafe, unsanitary or otherwise unfit for human habitation, or unreasonable to repair, to raze and remove such building. If the owner fails or refuses to comply with the order to raze, the department may cause such building or part thereof to be razed and removed and the cost may be charged to the owner directly or as a special tax against the property.

This authority is adopted by our Milwaukee Code of Ordinances under chapter 218 and the Condemnation section of DNS enforces it. This section is comprised of an assistant supervisor Ron Roberts, three building construction inspectors - Paul Schulz, Brian Kraus and Bill Richter and 2.5 clerical assistants - Jeanne Hagner, Wendy Sparapane and Marge Piwaron who also works for Administration. Tracy Williams supervises this section along with zoning enforcement and commercial code enforcement.

When DNS condemns a property, we are ordering someone to tear down their building and if they don't, we will and then we send them the bill! (Very drastic measure.) It is not a simple order. Because of the finality of this order, there are a lot of legal steps that are necessary to ensure it is enforceable. Once the building is razed, the City does not own the land. It is still owned by the property owner. The Condemnation section is allocated approximately \$2,000,000 each year to cover the cost of the demolition process. Typically we condemn approximately 300 buildings a year. Not all of them are demolished. And the ones that are torn down, not all of them are done under a City contract. Many owners take responsibility and have the buildings demolished as a result of our order. Yet, we do contract many of them for demolition. Last year, condemnation contracted over 175 demolition projects ranging from detached garages to a large industrial site with multiple buildings.

Condemnation through eminent domain is a different process. Lately, there have been some articles in the newspaper about a large parcel of land in the Menomonee Valley that the City is trying to condemn. In this case, the land (with the buildings) is being condemned under eminent domain through DCD. Eminent Domain is the right of the government or a public utility to acquire property for necessary public use by condemnation. Under this declaration, the ownership of the property is transferred to the government or utility through this act but the owner of the property is fairly compensated for the land/buildings meaning the government pays them for the property at fair market value. ☺

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So the sales job began. You will like it up there. The lab equipment won't get in your way. It will be fun to have a sink right next to your computer. No place to put your knees when you sit at the counter? Well, just sit side-ways, it's not forever. The exposed brick, concrete block and ductwork will look cool, just like in a loft. Many of the inspectors were not too happy. Do a good job and look what happens. They felt like they were being sent to purgatory for sins they did not commit.

Then in February of this year, things changed a bit. The inspectors were still going to go up there but the then-commissioner began to have second thoughts on how to finish off the space. He decided that this space should be finished off as an office space, even if DNS intends to use it for only a few years. Now, rather than using the existing counters and tables that were up there, all of it was going to be removed. The only thing that was saved was one counter along the west wall and an existing kitchen-type sink with counter and cabinet. Everything else was gone.

Then they put in carpeting through out and a new drop ceiling. A real desk (5' by 3') was brought up for each inspector (not new but at least a decent size). The walls were painted, new blinds installed and the windows were cleaned. It looked great! The big moving day was April 6th – it went without a hitch. They've been up there since and are the envy of the rest of the department. It's quiet and very roomy. It's so special that you need a pass card to get up there. And they have the best views in the city complex. What began with a fight to get us up here will now end with a fight to get us to leave. Let's keep our fingers crossed! ☺

DNS Administration has eyes on 2001

by Jeff Crouse

The design plan for the DNS first floor office space has been finalized and the project will be entering the construction phase. It is anticipated that the project will be completed by March of 2001. At that time, the Commissioner's office, Administration Division, Information Technology Division, Condemnation section, and the Housing Preservation Division (NIDC) will be relocated from their current 10th floor office area.

The second phase of the DNS remodeling project will begin later this year. The design plan for the 10th floor DNS office space will be developed to accommodate the Construction Trades Division, Commercial Inspection Division, Residential Inspection Division, Nuisance & Environmental Health Division, and the Court section. The scheduled completion date for this phase of the project is December of 2001. When this phase is completed, the Department will be entirely located in the Zeidler Municipal Building, and the satellite workstations at 1673 S. 9th Street and 1626 W. Fond du Lac Ave will be closed. ☺

It's a dirty job, but somebody has to do it

Wendy Sparapane, Condemnation section, came across this interesting fire report from the 3000 block of North Green Bay Rd. The cause of the fire was listed as suspicious. The amount of damage was \$1,000 The victim: "porta-potti shed fire."

New Program Targets Arson Problem

by Tracy Williams

On December 1, 1999, the American Red Cross held an Arson Task Force meeting and introduced HEAT (Help Eliminate Arson Today), a program that will work in cooperation with the Milwaukee Fire Department, Milwaukee Police Department, private industry and other organizations interested in helping eliminate arson as a community threat. This was triggered by a report from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report indicating that the number of arsons nationwide dropped 7% between 1997 and 1998, however, that same reporting group indicated that there was a 28% increase in arson in Milwaukee. The majority of these arson cases occurred in the 12th and 17th Alderman Districts.



Seeing firsthand the alarming trend in the number of house fires the American Red Cross Chapter's DAT (Disaster Action Team) responds to that are classified as arson, the unit began studying the nature of arson and the physical, emotional and economic effects it has on a neighborhood and on a community. As a way to deal with the problem, the chapter developed HEAT, a program that will work in cooperation with the MFD (Milwaukee Fire Department), the MPD (Milwaukee Police Department, private industry and other organizations interested in helping eliminate arson as a community threat.

The primary focus is awareness, education and mitigation. The purpose of forming four ad hoc committees was to develop specific plans and proposals. These committees are:

1. Educational
2. Community Awareness
3. Legislation
4. Residential Rehabilitation

In January 2000, the Red Cross developed four ad hoc committees as a response to this initial meeting. Tracy Williams, supervisor with the City of Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services accepted the co-chair position on the Residential Rehabilitation Committee. Other members of this committee include:

Kurt Warden (Co-Chair), Director of Casework Services for the American Red Cross.
Del Reynolds, Department of Housing and Urban Development
Sheila Ashley, also with HUD
Mike Brever, Executive Director, South Community Organization
Chris Litzau, Development Coordinator for Milwaukee Community Service Corps
Ron Roberts, Assistant Supervisor Condemnation, Dept. of Neighborhood Services
Captain Mark Sain, Milwaukee Fire Department

As a member of the Community Awareness Committee, Vida Mosley-Person coordinated a Property Management Training class entitled "Restoration of Fire Damaged Property". The presenter was Matt Everett, vice-president of Paul Davis Restoration Systems. The class was well received by the attendees and may very well be offered as part of the regular line-up of classes put on by the Property Management Program. Other members of the Community

Awareness Committee were Michael Miller (Mayor's Office), Veronica Carter (American Red Cross), Police Officer Latunya Peavy (MPD - 3rd district), Louis Adams (DAT), Greg Peterson (WI Arson Insurance Council), Mark Clark (Housing Authority of Milwaukee, and Gary Dalton (American Red Cross). Other contributions to and proposals submitted by the various committees were as follows:

- A profile of the typical pyromaniac
- Distribution of age-appropriate videos and materials to Milwaukee Public Schools
- A Fire Safety news-piece in the Special Section of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel to run the week of October 3-9, which is National Fire Prevention Week.
- Establishing a clearinghouse or intermediary agency that will work with property owners that have problems with tenants or can't keep up with the expenses of keeping properties in good condition.
- Publicizing the penalties for arson, using billboards, buses bumper stickers, etc. Few people actually know the penalty for arson

This committee was assigned the task on how to promote rehabilitation in critical areas of the City to help reduce the number of vacant deteriorating dwellings that tend to be the prime targets for arson. We discussed how dwellings evolve into this condition including:

- Banks that recently foreclosed and now want to unload these types of dwellings.
- Property flipping scams
- Landlords that collect any rent they get and never re-invest the money back into the property. Once they are done with it they walk away leaving the City with the results or let a mortgage company foreclose.
- Tenant retaliation due to eviction
- Vandalism
- Illegal activity - Drug houses, prostitution

There are properties that mortgage companies or landlords want to sell but they do not know where to go to find a buyer or if they have a buyer, where that buyer can get financing. Each member of the committee knew of different banks or programs that finance these projects, groups that do this type of rehab, grants available, interested buyers, and other types of resources. But we realized that there was no central source for this information. What our committee proposes to do for this project is to gather this information, organize it and make it available.

In the next several months, we will network with all different organizations that know of or provide these types of services and compile a database. This data will be organized and put into a document for distribution. It will also be available on the Internet at the web site for the Department of Neighborhood Services and the American Red Cross. We intend to distribute this information to banks, insurance companies, community groups, government services, churches, landlord associations, Realtors, and potential buyers of these types of properties. Our project will be successful if we can get one, two, or several of these properties repaired and reused due to the information we provide. Rehab of these dwellings will help maintain the fabric of our neighborhoods and take away one more potential target for arson. ☺



COMMISSIONER'S CORNER

by Commissioner Martin G. Collins

At DNS, our primary job is to make Milwaukee a better place in which to live and to work. You should know how to sum up my overall philosophy as the new DNS Commissioner and now you do!

Everything we do should be directly or indirectly related to this fundamental proposition. It has already led us into some non-traditional areas of concern. For example, the new noise ordinance is a joint MPD-DNS effort designed to help neighborhoods be a more desirable place to live and to sleep! The question is not what have we always done by way of delivering services but rather what should we be doing. We need to provide those services with personal pride and ownership in what we do. I look forward to the opportunity to explore that challenge with you as we move into the future.

Who is that guy and how did he get to be Commissioner? Here is a short biography for all of those who might have asked that question. I was born and raised in a small town in upstate New York and graduated from the State University of New York at Albany before obtaining a Masters in City and Regional Planning and then a Juris Doctorate degree from Rutgers. My first "real" job was as assistant council to the New York City Planning Commission. From there I worked for the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development in various positions including Managing Attorney for Manhattan in the Housing Litigation Bureau and as Director of Operations for the division that did New York's receivership, housing code enforcement, building improvement loans and tenant management programs. One day my wife came home and said that she had been offered a faculty position at UWM so I quit and became a Midwesterner. That was 20 years ago.

In the interim, I have served Milwaukee as Code Enforcement Administrator, Construction Inspection Administrator and, for the past 14 years, as Deputy Commissioner of Building Inspection and then DNS. I hold certifications in zoning inspection and housing inspection from the American Association of Code Enforcement, serve on the International Code Council's certification committee for property maintenance inspectors and am certified in commercial and UDC construction code in Wisconsin.

I particularly enjoy that portion of my job that allows me to work with others to improve the way that we deliver services. I am proud of my role in the creation of the Landlord Training Program, reforming the nuisance vehicle removal program and the reinspection fee system, for example. Every day that I come to work I realize that there is more to learn and that I am fortunate to work with a good group of dedicated staff.

My outside interests include biking, old-time radio, books on tape and humor. I love to laugh! My next personal challenge is to become certified for SCUBA. My wife Mary Lynne is a Professor of Microbiology at UWM where she teaches and does research. My 17 year old son is a Junior at Marquette University High and is currently adding to my growing baldness with his practice driving. I am a firm believer that the only thing that we control in this life [other than the car keys] is our attitude. I have tried it both ways and find a positive attitude a lot more fun than the alternative. ☺

RUSTBELT from page 1

the property tax bill. Landlords need to monitor vehicles parked on their property. Property owners with unwanted or unknown vehicles on their property can have them removed free of charge. If they receive a notice, they must first contact the inspector listed on the sticker/order or DNS for the details at 286-2268. Otherwise call DPW at 286-8350 in the absence of an order.

At a minimum, citizens are urged to keep their vehicles properly licensed. One copy of the notice to remove the vehicle goes to the licensed owner. If no registration is on file in the state and there is no response from the landlord, the car will likely be towed and destroyed.

The Environmental and Nuisance Abatement division has worked hard to improve the speed and quality of the service that they provide to control nuisance vehicle violations. It has resulted in the average case processing time from inspection to referral to the tow lot from a high of 90 days down to under 20 days. Many are being removed even more quickly. In 1998 235 cars were referred for towing and in 1999, 881 vehicles were sent to the tow truck.

A recent switch of the parking checker duties to DPW has given the impetus to reexamine how "abandoned" vehicles on private property are processed. No longer will we have to delay the process by stopping the nuisance vehicle action and having the parking checkers start over again on the same junk car. We have taken DPW's offer to waive the tow charge when the property owner provides a letter of abandonment of the vehicle. This all boils down to a much faster process of nuisance abatement.

Sometimes we do not appreciate how important the removal of such nuisances are to the perception of the neighborhoods. Mr. Randy Roth was until recently the executive director of the King Drive Business Improvement district and is credited for having a major role in that area's revitalization. He explained to a tour bus full of other BID directors and visitors from other cities hoping to emulate his success that "Before you can launch into any effective redevelopment strategy, you must first take care of the basics. No one will take you seriously if you cannot clean up the nuisances." He listed nuisance vehicles, garbage nuisances and illegal auto repair garages among those that must be dealt with in order to get revitalization going. He extends his thanks to all that have made it possible to rid his target area of such nuisances.

Commissioner Collins extends his thanks to Don Schaeewe, Dave Krey, Jim Igowsky, Laurie Petrie and to all of the Vector and Nuisance Officers who have worked hard to get DNS to this point. ☺

NSS Wins Award from page 1

schools, and special districts.

The innovation was marked first in its significance, creativity, effectiveness, and customer centric focus. The NSS site has provided valuable information to a wide range of users, many of whom are in the business of verifying where people live and who they rent from. The gas company uses it to check on tenants history. Insurance companies use it to verify home ownership. The police and fire departments use it to contact owners in an emergency.

Contributors to the development of the NSS are Craig Hapanovich from ITMD, Commissioner Martin Collins, Carolyn Wood, Jim Styers, Skip Seager and Todd Weiler from DNS.

NSS can be accessed from the DNS web site at: <http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/citygov/dns/main/propertydata/nss/bistart.html> (See related use story on page one.)